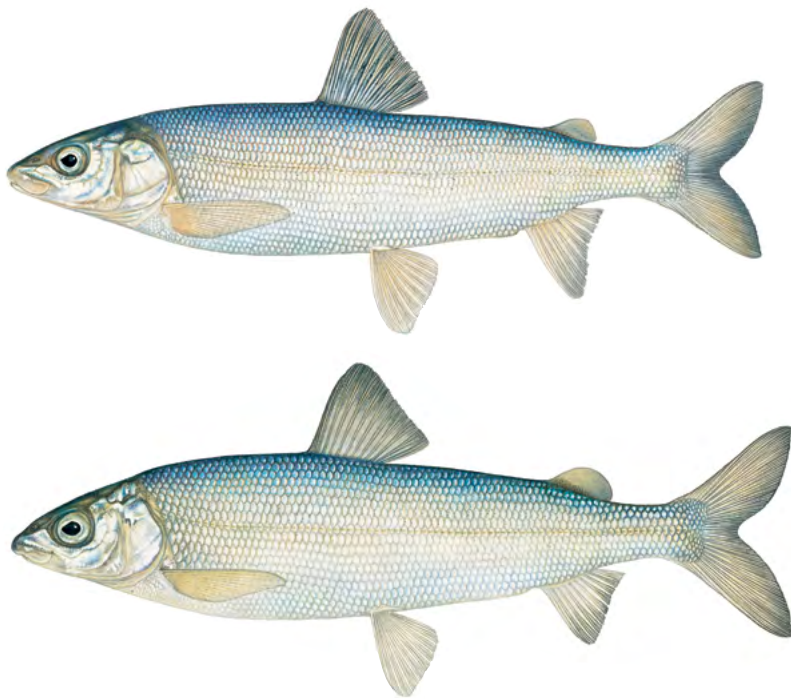


## IDENTIFYING UTAH'S NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE FISH

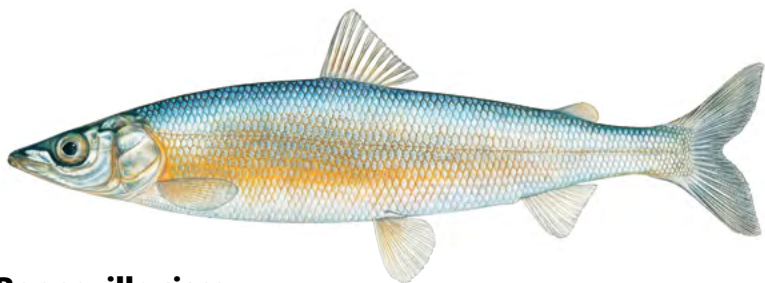
When you catch a fish, you need to be able to identify it quickly and accurately, especially if you're at a fishery with size or species restrictions. The illustrations and descriptions in this section should help you identify fish across Utah. All illustrations in this section are the copyrighted work of artist Joe Tomelleri.

### Native coldwater sportfish



### Bonneville whitefish and Bear Lake whitefish

These two fish are indistinguishable at sizes of less than 10 inches in length. Both species may have gray-blue spots along their sides. These whitefish are elongated, relatively cylindrical fish. They are typically silvery-white along their sides, grading into charcoal gray to black on their backs. Bonneville whitefish may reach four pounds and grow to a length of 20 inches, but Bear Lake whitefish do not grow larger than 10 inches. Both species occur only in Bear Lake.



### **Bonneville cisco**

The Bonneville cisco is a long, slender, pearly-silver fish found only in Bear Lake. It rarely grows beyond seven inches. It has a dusky blue back and a brassy band along its flanks at spawning time. The snout is sharply pointed. It is noted for its mid-January spawning concentrations along a rocky beach on the east side of Bear Lake, where it is dipnetted in large numbers.



### **Mountain whitefish**

This fish is light brown on its back and fins and silver to white on its belly and sides. The lower jaw and snout are short and blunt, with a flap on each nostril.



### **Roundtail chub**

Roundtail chubs are native to the Green and Colorado River watersheds. They prefer turbulent streams and rivers, where they feed on drifting bugs and small fish. Their feeding patterns are very similar to those of trout. Their bodies are streamlined, and they have olive-colored backs and silver sides. Like other chubs, they are true minnows and do not have teeth. Individuals typically live for 10–15 years and can grow to be 20 inches long. For more information about roundtail, see page 18.

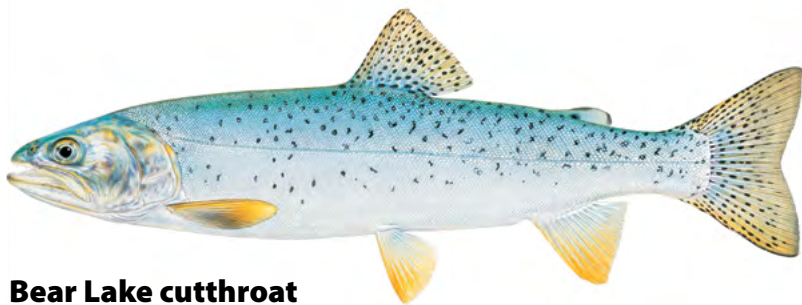
## Native trout

There are three primary subspecies (strains) of native cutthroat trout in Utah: the Bonneville cutthroat trout, Colorado River cutthroat trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout. The Bear Lake cutthroat trout is a lake-dwelling form of the Bonneville cutthroat trout. Except for the Bear Lake cutthroat trout, cutthroats are best distinguished by their crimson slash along the lower jaw. Cutthroat trout lack the iridescent pink stripe or the white-tipped pelvic and anal fins of the rainbow trout.



### Bonneville cutthroat

Bonneville cutthroat trout originally inhabited the Bonneville Basin. They have sparsely scattered, large and very distinctive round spots over the upper body, with few spots on or near the head. Bonneville cutthroat trout are a subdued silver-gray to charcoal color on the upper body, with shades of bronze and pink on their flanks during spawning.



### Bear Lake cutthroat

Bear Lake cutthroat trout often lack the bright crimson jaw slash, which may at times be yellow, gray or nonexistent. Deep orange pelvic and anal fins and the presence of few, if any, spots on the head readily distinguish Bear Lake cutthroat from rainbow trout (see rainbow trout description). Bear Lake cutthroat can exhibit a variety of spotting patterns, but spots are generally sparsely scattered, large and rounded in outline. Spotting is typically more concentrated near the tail. During the spawning season, Bear Lake cutthroat (particularly the males) take on a bronze color along the sides and lower body, and often develop rosy-colored gill plates.



### Colorado River cutthroat

Colorado River cutthroat trout are native to the Green and Colorado River watersheds and are noted for their brilliant coloration. The males, in spawning condition, have bright crimson stripes along the sides and the stomach. Spotting is usually concentrated toward the tail area.

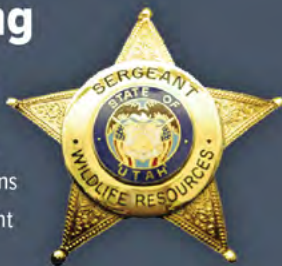


### Yellowstone cutthroat

Yellowstone cutthroat trout are native to the Snake River watershed in northwestern Utah, including the Raft River Mountains. Yellowstone cutthroat trout are lightly spotted, with distinctly round spots concentrated toward the tail area.

## Don't lose your hunting and fishing privileges

As a hunter or angler in Utah, it is your responsibility to know the laws and abide by them. Wildlife violations may result in fines, jail time, confiscation of equipment and the loss of hunting and fishing privileges.



Wildlife crimes are serious. Learn more at [wildlife.utah.gov/know-consequences](https://wildlife.utah.gov/know-consequences).

## Non-native coldwater sportfish



### Rainbow trout

A rainbow trout is dark green to bluish on the back with silvery sides. The pinkish to reddish horizontal band typifies the species. The belly may be white to silvery. Irregular and profuse black spots are usually present on the head, back and sides. The pelvic and anal fins are translucent pink to gray-green and tipped in white. The coloration of a river-dwelling rainbow trout is often more vibrant than that of a lake dweller. Rainbow trout also tend to have a fairly blunt snout.



### Lake trout

This species of char has a background color of gray-brown, overlaid with light spots that vary in intensity with age and environment. The background color covers the back, sides and fins, highlighting the lighter gray spots. Lake trout in large lakes are sometimes so silvery that the spots are difficult to see. Spotting is usually more intense on small fish. The tail fin is deeply forked. The mouth is large and features strong teeth on both jaws.



## Brook trout

This species of char may be olive to blue-gray on its back and white on its belly. Red spots, usually with bluish halos around them, are present on the sides. Colors can vary greatly, depending on whether the fish lives in a stream or a lake. Characteristic light wavy marks on the back are a distinguishing feature. The obvious white-and-black striping pattern along the front edge of each of the lower fins makes it easier to distinguish brook trout from other trout species. The tail fin is squared or lightly forked.



## Splake

A splake trout is the hybrid cross between lake trout and brook trout. It has a dark background with white spots. Its tail fin is not as deeply forked as that of a lake trout.

## Golden trout (not illustrated)

The golden trout has a golden belly with red, horizontal bands along the lateral lines on its sides. Golden trout also have about 10 dark, vertical, oval-shaped marks (called parr marks) on each side.



### **Tiger trout**

The tiger trout, a brown trout and a brook trout hybrid cross, has a unique, dark maze-like pattern all over its brownish, gray body. The belly is yellowish-orange as are the pectoral, pelvic and anal fins. The tail fin is square.



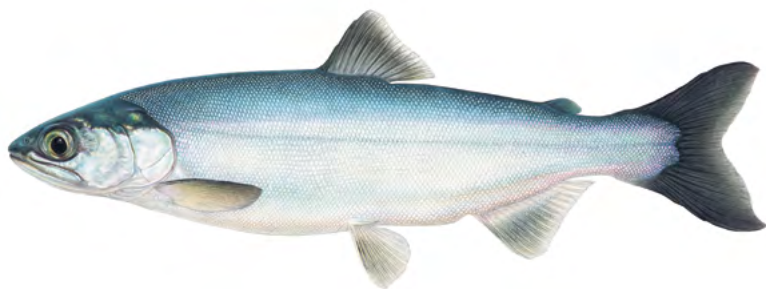
### **Arctic grayling**

Arctic grayling are silvery to light purple on the sides and bluish-white on the belly. They are relatively slender and are most easily distinguished by their long, high, sail-like dorsal fin. The dorsal fin is brilliantly colored with shades of pink, green and purple.



### **Brown trout**

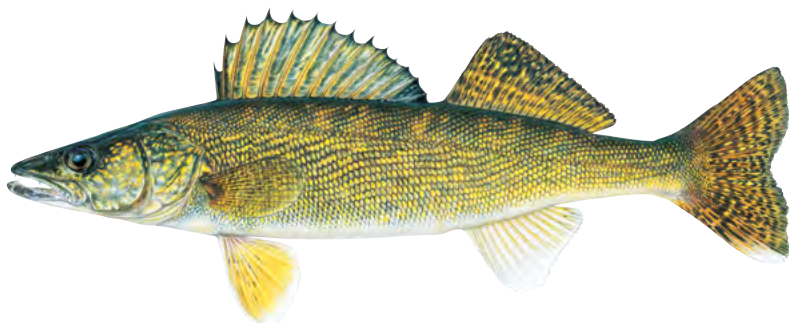
Brown trout generally have golden brown hues with yellow underparts. During spawning, the males often have brilliant crimson spots circled with blue halos. The upper body is usually dappled with large, irregular, dark-chocolate spots. Brown trout are carnivorous and have stronger, sharper teeth than most trout.



## Kokanee salmon

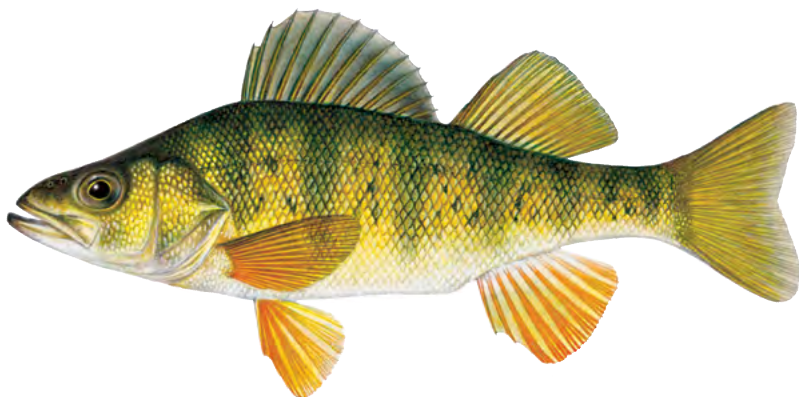
Kokanee are bright silvery fish with no definitive spotting pattern. Kokanee have a dark blue back with silvery sides. As the spawning season approaches, kokanee turn from silver to orange to deep red, and the male develops the characteristic hump on the back, elongated head and hooked jaw common to the Pacific salmon. A deeply forked tail also distinguishes them from rainbow, cutthroat and brown trout.

## Non-native cool and warmwater sportfish



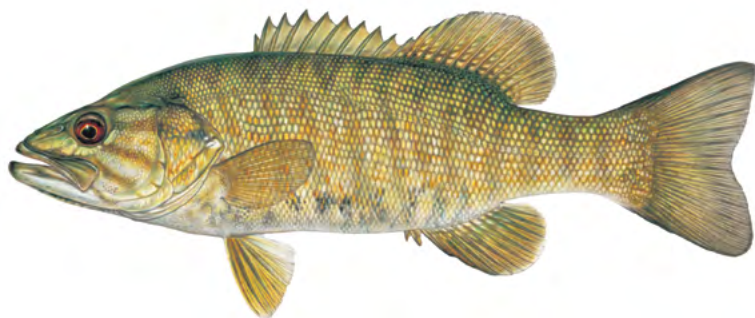
## Walleye

Prominent sharp teeth distinguish this big perch from its smaller cousin, the yellow perch. Walleye are a brassy olive buff color that sometimes shades to yellowish sides and a white underbelly. There is a large, dark blotch at the rear base of the first dorsal fin, and the lower lobe of the tail is white-tipped. The tail is moderately forked.



### **Yellow perch**

Yellow perch are yellowish with dark vertical bars. The tail fin is forked, and the dorsal fin is divided.



### **Smallmouth bass**

The snout is long and bluntly pointed, with the lower jaw slightly longer than the upper jaw. Smallmouth bass vary in color, depending on their habitat, but are normally dark olive/brown on the back. Their sides and belly are lighter and yellowish. There are 8 to 15 (average 9) dark vertical bars on the sides, which distinguish them from the largemouth bass. The anterior dorsal fin has 10 spines and is strongly joined to the soft dorsal. The anal fin has three spines.

**DOUSE. STIR.  
CHECK. REPEAT.**

Extinguish campfires. Prevent wildfires.





## Largemouth bass

The head of a largemouth bass is large and long. Its mouth is also large, with an upper jaw that reaches past the center of the eye in adults. The upper parts of the body and head are greenish, with a silvery or brassy shine. The belly is white to yellow, and there is an irregular dark stripe along the sides. The eyes of a largemouth bass are brown.



## Bullhead

Adults are blackish, dark olive or dark brown on the back. The belly is greenish-white or bright yellow. The tail is not forked.



## Channel catfish

Channel catfish have a long anal fin and deeply forked tail that distinguish them from other catfish. The body is pale bluish-olive above and bluish-white below. They usually have spots but lose them with age. Both the dorsal and pectoral fins have strong, sharp spines. The mouth is short, wide and horizontal with chin and snout barbels.



### **Black crappie**

The black crappie has two closely joined dorsal fins, with seven or eight dorsal fin spines. Black crappie are silver-olive with numerous, random black or green splotches on their sides. Vertical bars—more prominent in young black crappie or white crappie—are absent in adult black crappie. Their sides are light, iridescent green to silvery. The belly is silvery to white. Pelvic fins are opaque with some black on the tips of the membranes, and pectoral fins are dusky and transparent.



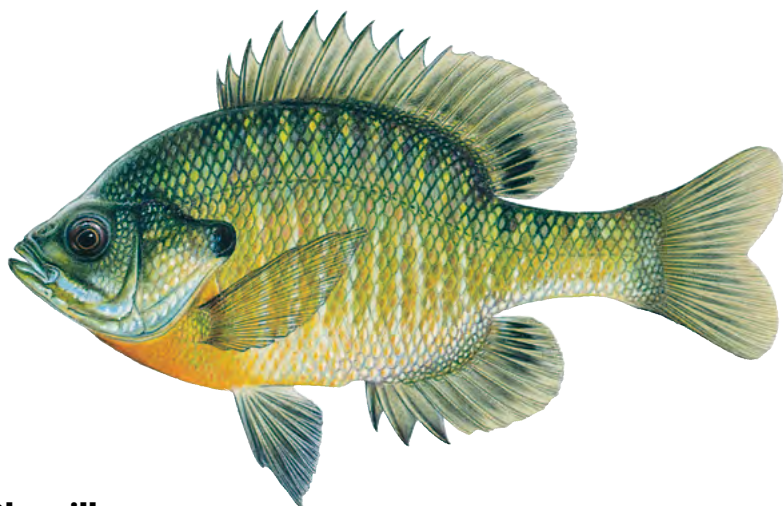
### **White crappie**

The white crappie has two closely joined dorsal fins, with only six dorsal fin spines. White crappie are silver-olive with numerous black or green splotches on their sides, often arranged in vertical bars. Their sides are light, iridescent green to silvery. The belly is silvery to white. Pelvic fins are opaque with some black on the tips of the membranes, and pectoral fins are dusky and transparent. Utah only has a few populations of white crappie.



### **Green sunfish**

Green sunfish are brassy-green or blue-green on the back, sometimes with metallic-green flecks and dusky bars on the sides. The flap over the gills is a dark color.



### **Bluegill**

Bluegill are shorter, deep-bodied fish, whose name comes from the dark flap over the gills. The body is olive-green with vertical bars, and some blue and orange may be present.



### **Northern pike**

Northern pike are characterized by a long, slender, torpedo-shaped body. They have a pattern of light-colored markings on each side of the body that form seven to nine horizontal rows on a dark background. The tail fins are rounded at the ends. The northern pike differs from other similar species in having fully scaled cheeks.



### **Tiger muskellunge**

The tiger muskie is a hybrid cross between a muskellunge and northern pike. It features characteristics from both parents. It has a very elongated torpedo-like body. Its most notable features are the grey-green vertical bars along its sides. It can reach lengths of more than 50 inches and weigh more than 30 pounds.



### **Striped bass**

Striped bass coloration ranges from bluish-black to either dark grey or olive-green above. Their sides are silvery and their bellies white. Striped bass have seven to nine unbroken stripes along each side. The body is somewhat streamlined. The mouth is oblique, and the lower jaw longer than the upper. The dorsal fins are clearly separated. The tail fin is forked.



### **White bass**

The back of a white bass is usually grey, charcoal or green. It typically has silvery sides and a white belly. It also has five to seven longitudinal stripes on each side. The body of a white bass is deeper and less streamlined than that of the striped bass.



### **Wiper**

The wiper is a hybrid cross between a female striped bass and a male white bass. Its appearance reflects both parents. It has six to eight dark, horizontal broken stripes over a silver-white background, with a dark charcoal to black back. It has two dorsal fins, the anterior with eight to ten sharp spines. It is slightly heavier bodied than the striped bass and grows up to 12 pounds in weight and 24 inches in length.

## Non-native nongame fish



### Carp

Carp have deep, thick bodies that are gray to brassy green or yellowish green. The body is normally covered with large scales, and carp have fleshy barbels on each side of the mouth. A large spine is present at the front of the dorsal (top) fin.



### Burbot

Burbot, or ling cod, were illegally introduced into Flaming Gorge. Burbot are a slender, smooth-skinned fish with a large barbel in the middle of the chin and two dorsal fins, the second of which is half the length of the body and matched by an anal fin of about the same length. The coloring ranges from yellow to light brown with a wavy pattern of dark brown or black. Despite the odd, eel-like appearance, burbot have flaky white flesh that tastes excellent. All burbot caught in Flaming Gorge must be immediately killed (see page 32).

### White sucker (not illustrated)

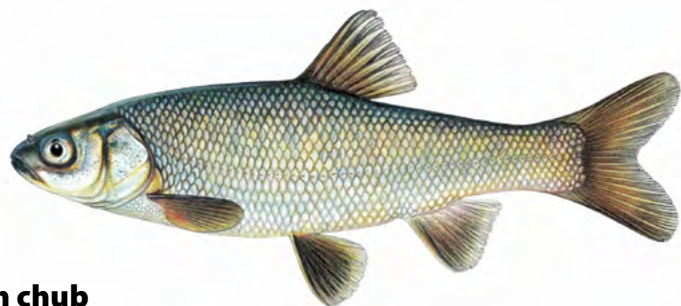
White sucker were likely introduced into Utah waters by anglers releasing live bait. These fish are found in northern and southeastern Utah, primarily in the Colorado River drainage. White suckers can hybridize with native populations of Utah, flannelmouth and bluehead suckers, and are replacing native sucker populations in some areas. White suckers primarily feed on bottom-dwelling bugs, and prefer pool habitats in streams and rivers. White suckers are mottled olive or gray along their backs, have dark horizontal streaks along their sides and a white underbelly. Although sometimes misidentified as flannelmouth sucker, white suckers have longer and wider heads, larger scales and a wider tail base than flannelmouth suckers (see page 66). Adults can grow to over 25 inches in length.

## Native nongame fish



### Utah sucker

The Utah sucker is dark olive to copper, with dusky fins and a downward-facing mouth.



### Utah chub

Utah chub have robust bodies and large scales. Their coloration ranges from dark olive green or black on the upper back to silvery, brassy or golden sides. They can be distinguished by the way their fins align. The front edge of the dorsal fin (on the fish's back) aligns with the front edge of the middle fin on the fish's belly.

## Utah's sensitive and endangered fish



Bluehead Sucker  
Green Sucker



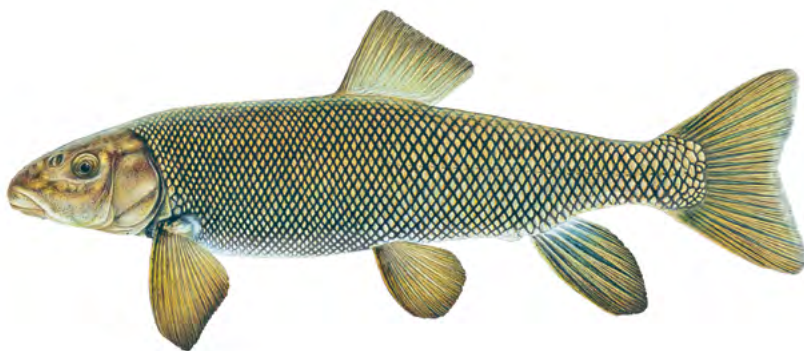
### Bluehead and green suckers

Bluehead suckers are native to the Green and Colorado River watersheds. As a result of genetic studies, the Bonneville Basin populations were recently split into a separate species called the green sucker. While they are genetically distinct, both species look very similar: They have dusky blue heads, a streamlined body and the scales near their tails are much larger than those near their heads. Both species feed on algae and bugs that they scrape off the rocks and, for this reason, they prefer swift rocky waters. Adults can grow to be 16 inches long.



### **Flannelmouth sucker**

Flannelmouth suckers are native to the Green, Colorado and Virgin River watersheds. Individuals can live up to 30 years, reach lengths up to 30 inches and sometimes migrate more than 150 miles to spawn. Their lips are large and fleshy, and their backs can range in color from light olive to dark brown. Flannelmouth suckers live in a variety of habitats. You could find them in the depths of the Colorado River in Cataract Canyon or in a small tributary like the Strawberry River.



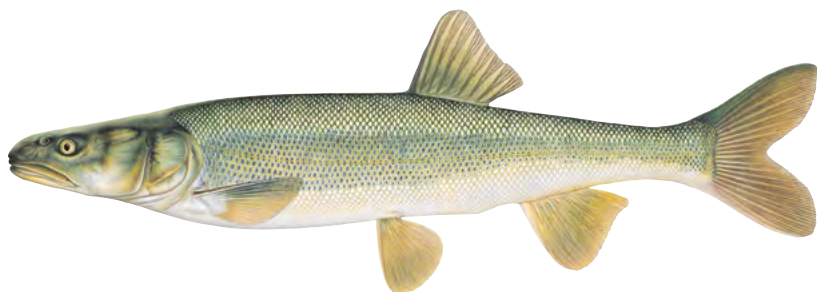
### **June sucker**

The June sucker occurs in Utah Lake and the Provo River. Although once abundant in Utah Lake, it is now rare. The June sucker is listed as threatened, and efforts to help recover the June sucker population are ongoing. Although June suckers are members of the sucker family, they are not bottom feeders. The jaw structure of the June sucker allows the species to feed on zooplankton in the middle of the water column.



## Bonytail

The bonytail is currently found in limited stretches of the Green and Colorado mainstem rivers, where the species is stocked by the Upper Colorado River Recovery Program. The species is endangered and, if caught, should be returned immediately to the water unharmed. The body is highly streamlined, with a bluish, dusky color above to pale below. The head is short and noticeably concave. The area just in front of the fish's tail fin is extremely narrow. Bonytail can reach lengths of 22 inches and weigh more than two pounds in the wild.



## Colorado pikeminnow

The highly predacious Colorado pikeminnow is found in the Green, Colorado and San Juan rivers and their tributaries. The pikeminnow is an endangered species, and efforts are underway to protect the fish throughout its native range. The pikeminnow's body is long and slender, with a gray-green back and silver sides. The head is long and conical, with a large, horizontal mouth. The tail fin is large and deeply forked. The pikeminnow can reach lengths up to six feet and can weigh 80 pounds. It should be returned to the water immediately if caught.



### **Humpback chub**

The humpback chub is threatened and is found in canyon-bound habitats of the Green and Colorado rivers. The humpback chub has a streamlined body, with a dark, olive-gray back and silver sides. The head is small. The area in front of its tail is slender, although thicker than that of the bonytail. The fatty hump that is thought to keep the fish on the stream bottom and stabilize it in fast, flowing waters. The humpback chub can reach lengths up to 18 inches and can weigh up to two pounds.



### **Razorback sucker**

The razorback sucker is found in the mainstem Green, Colorado and San Juan rivers. Razorback suckers prefer shallow, off-channel habitats for spawning in the springtime. The razorback sucker is endangered and is stocked in many portions of its native range, including Utah, by the Upper Colorado River Recovery Program. The species normally has an olive-colored to brown or black back, brown to pinkish sides, and a white to yellow belly. Adults have a sharp-edged keel or “humpback.” The mouth faces downward, and the lower lip is widely separated into two lobes by a deep groove. The razorback sucker can reach lengths up to 36 inches and can weigh up to 13 pounds.